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## Viewing cable 06QUITO1400, ECUADOR-COLOMBIA BORDER PROGRESS REPORT - JAN-MAY

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">06QUITO1400</a>	<a href="#">2006-06-07 22:12</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Quito</a>

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014  
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SUBJECT: ECUADOR-COLOMBIA BORDER PROGRESS REPORT - JAN-MAY  
2006

¶1. (C) Summary: Ecuadorian northern border military and anti-drug police units scored several successes against narco-terrorists in the first half of 2006. The Ecuadorian military made multiple FARC camp busts, seizing arms, communication devices, and military equipment, as well as capturing two FARC trainees. Anti-narcotics police seized 1.95 metric tons of cocaine and 14 kg of heroin in the northern provinces. These successes underscore the Ecuadorian military and anti-narcotics police capacity to fend off FARC infiltration of Ecuadorian territory, when provided adequate financial and political support. Nevertheless, the FARC's covert sphere of influence in border towns remains a serious concern, and continues to hinder Ecuadorian military and police efforts.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador visited the province of Carchi on May 18 to demonstrate USG support for security and development. WHA Andean Affairs Director Philip French and the DCM delivered a similar message on their April 17 visit to Lago Agrio and General Farfan, Sucumbios province. NAS continued support for anti-narcotics police and military units by funding equipment, infrastructure, and capacity building courses. MILGP supported military units operating in the northern border region with funding for food rations, fuel, radios, vehicles, communication devices, and training. Meanwhile, USAID pushed forward with development programs, completing 20 water treatment facilities, 17 sewage systems, and will complete work on 10 bridge and road construction projects. USAID also supported civil society development programs and increased public outreach to highlight USG support in the northern border region. End Summary.

#### Ecuadorian Military Ramps-Up FARC Camp Search

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¶3. (U) Ecuadorian military units on February 18 dismantled a FARC encampment in Santa Rosa, Sucumbios province. Two FARC trainees were captured during the raid, along with weapons, ammunition, and other logistical support items. Ecuadorian military units on May 7-14 conducted "Operation Clean" in the Cuembi Triangle border region around the Putumayo and San Miguel Rivers in the Sucumbios province. The units, which included over 1,100 troops from the army, navy and air force, dismantled five FARC camps near the towns of Santa Rosa and Santa Elena. Arms, mortar fabrication equipment, ammunition, mobile telephone antennas, military supplies, uniforms, and revolutionary literature were confiscated in the raids.

¶4. (C) Embassy sources estimate that Ecuadorian military units discovered at least 25 camps. However, they informed the public about only five them. These five camps had been abandoned within 24 hours of the raids, and were found in areas of limited GOE presence and few access roads. The remaining twenty camps had either been cleared previously by the Ecuadorian military, or had been abandoned for some time.

¶5. (U) Minister of Defense OswaldoJarrin held a press conference on May 29 to announce the camp discoveries, and to highlight Ecuadorian military efforts to control the troubled northern border region. Jarrin said that his forces are dedicated to protecting the nation's borders, and that Ecuadorians should have confidence in the professionalism and commitment of its military. Jarrin told the DATT and PolOff on June 2 that the five camp discovery had generated the opportune moment for him to reinforce the need to revise the nation's defense strategy, and confirmed reports that the Ministry was shifting priorities to the northern border region. He said that the Ecuadorian public is finally starting to understand the difference between national defense efforts in the north, which includes cooperation with the Colombian military, and involving the nation in Plan Colombia. Jarrin will be in the U.S. the week of June 11 to discuss northern border challenges and successes with DOD counterparts.

## Ecuadorian Military Increases Border Presence

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¶6. (C) The 13th Brigade conducted a security sweep in the Carchi province near the town of Lita in early May. The area has very little GOE government presence and few access roads. Although there were no major finds, increased Ecuadorian

military presence will hopefully deter future activity.

¶7. (C) Ecuadorian military units in the Esmeraldas province tightened efforts to stop fuel sales to FARC and other narco-terrorist groups, confiscated illegal arms, eradicated four coca plantation sites (each over 1.5 hectares), and increased unit patrols in areas where FARC/narco-terrorist training camps were suspected. The 19th Jungle Brigade, located in El Coca, Orellana province, seized 72,337 gallons of petroleum ether, found and destroyed 22 petroleum robbery sites, seized 57 kg of cocaine from routine checkpoint inspections, apprehended 20 individuals for illicit trafficking of precursor chemicals and cocaine base, and destroyed four coca plantations. The 19th Jungle Brigade was also a key participant in "Operation Clean".

¶8. (C) The Ecuadorian army increased the 39th Army Infantry Battalion's (Tulcan, Carchi) personnel strength to 90% of its capacity (approximately 500 troops). The Army is considering moving part of the 38th Battalion, located in the central province of Pichincha, to the northern border region. The MOD sent another infantry battalion from Guayas Province to the western border province of Esmeraldas, and is considering increasing the number of troops in the city of General Farfan, Sucumbios province by building a navy riverine outpost. MILGP and NAS provided funding for food, radios, vehicles and other basic logistical necessities, which allowed border units to conduct more frequent border patrols. MILGP and NAS-funded training programs also helped Ecuadorian military units better prepare for the border security threat.

## Counter-Drug Initiatives Move Forward

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¶9. (SBU) The Ecuadorian National Police have been very responsive to the narco-terrorist threat. With NAS support, the elite anti-narcotics unit improved border drug inspection efforts and increased overall capabilities to combat narcotics trafficking. This directly aided in the seizure of 1.95 metric tons of cocaine and 14 kg of heroin between January and May 2006 in the northern border region.

¶10. (SBU) NAS counter-drug efforts in the northern border region remained steady during the first half of 2006. In Baeza, Napo province, NAS funded improvements to an anti-narcotics base for the elite mobile narcotics unit. MILGP delivered \$3 million in communication radios to anti-narcotics police and military officials, and NAS donated 18 trucks to the anti-narcotics police. Construction bids were sent out for the new \$1.8 million anti-narcotics inspection center in Tulcan, Carchi province and the \$650,000 port inspection facility in the port of Esmeraldas. NAS also funded two intelligence gathering courses in Quito. Fifty police and military officials attended.

¶11. (C) In Sucumbios province in May, 12 special mobile anti-narcotics police (GEMA) recently trained by the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (BORTAC) tactical team, were ambushed by local citizens as they attempted to take away three vehicles loaded with petroleum ether, a drug-processing chemical precursor likely robbed from local petroleum pipelines. The heavily-armed police were attacked and their vehicle doused with gas by dozens of men, women and children, who accused them of interfering with their "honest" labors. The police returned the vehicles to the mob, but later re-captured one and were able to obtain information leading them to a large petroleum ether storage facility and tapping valve, which they destroyed. The unit's commander credited

BORTAC training for enabling them to handle the incident without bloodshed. They plan a large follow-on operation to act on intelligence gathered during this incident.

#### Ecuadorian-Colombian Military Cooperation Good, But Tenuous

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¶12. (C) Ecuadorian military officials at the operational level report that cross-border communication between Ecuadorian and Colombian military units is improving, with regular intelligence sharing for force protection needs.

¶13. (U) The press on May 27 reported an airspace violation by two or more Colombian helicopters in Puerto Nuevo,

Sucumbios province on May 26. The Ministry of Defense, seeking to defuse a potentially volatile issue, on May 26 issued a statement claiming that Ecuador's air defense system had not registered the presence of Colombian helicopters in the region, and that the GOE therefore concluded that there had been no violation of Ecuadorian airspace.

#### Development Projects and Bi-national Plan Progress

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¶14. (U) USAID completed 20 water treatment facilities, 17 sanitation systems, and will soon finish 10 bridge and road construction projects. Three municipalities were added to the local government strengthening program. The Third Northern Border Survey on Development, Security and Narco-trafficking, released in February, found that a growing number of northern border residents have a more favorable image of USG support in the region. This increase was aided by USAID's successful public outreach campaign, "JUNTOS" (together). Five of the six major regions that constitute the province of Carchi, however, took to the streets on May 30 to demand additional funds for infrastructure projects. The central government met these demands on June 2, agreeing to transfer \$2 million to the disgruntled province.

¶15. (U) USAID reports that this year has marked continued successful generation of new jobs in several crop sectors, which has significantly increased income and productivity for many farmers. USAID project associates organized a regional workshop on cacao, held in Quevedo, Los Rios province. Producers and processors from Peru, Bolivia, Colombia and Ecuador participated. They found that there is a strong global demand for cacao, and are working to help actors access markets. USAID funded similar events for Ecuadorian coffee growers and potential U.S. buyers.

¶16. (U) Ecuadorian and Colombian government officials met in Quito on April 24-25 to advance plans for an integrated development zone along their common border. The plan aims to increase public services in the area of health, education, water, and transportation, while encouraging licit economic growth and sound environmental management. High-level GOE and GOC officials met in Bogota in mid-May to discuss the draft text. Foreign Ministers Barco and Carrion are scheduled to sign the agreement in June.

#### Comment

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¶17. (C) Country Team members agree that operational cooperation from military and police officials on security matters continues to be strong. However, unit commanders remain constrained by limited resources and resistance at the political level to more publicly aggressive engagement against FARC and other narco-terrorist groups operating in Ecuador. Jarrin's recent announcement that Ecuador must review its northern border security strategy demonstrates that he intends to raise public awareness of the growing threat, making more aggressive engagement politically feasible. His comment that international financial support would be sought opens possibilities for increased USG security cooperation. The Foreign Ministry, however, remains very cautious about actions that could be criticized as

drawing Ecuador into Colombia's internal conflict.

¶18. (C) Meanwhile, cooperation with the GOE on development programs remains strong, with local and national officials routinely requesting increased support. Greater development funding is needed, however, to more effectively encourage licit economic activity.

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